NO. 22

PETER STUYVESANT

STUYVESANT SIGH

1910

A GAME OF BOWLS IN BOWLING GREEN

By Griffith Baily Coale. From a mural decoration in the New York Athletic Club

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PETER STUYVESANT

AN ADDRESS
DELIVERED AT THE ANNUAL MEETING

OF

THE ORDER OF COLONIAL LORDS
OF MANORS IN AMERICA

April 21st, 1930

STUYVESANT FISH

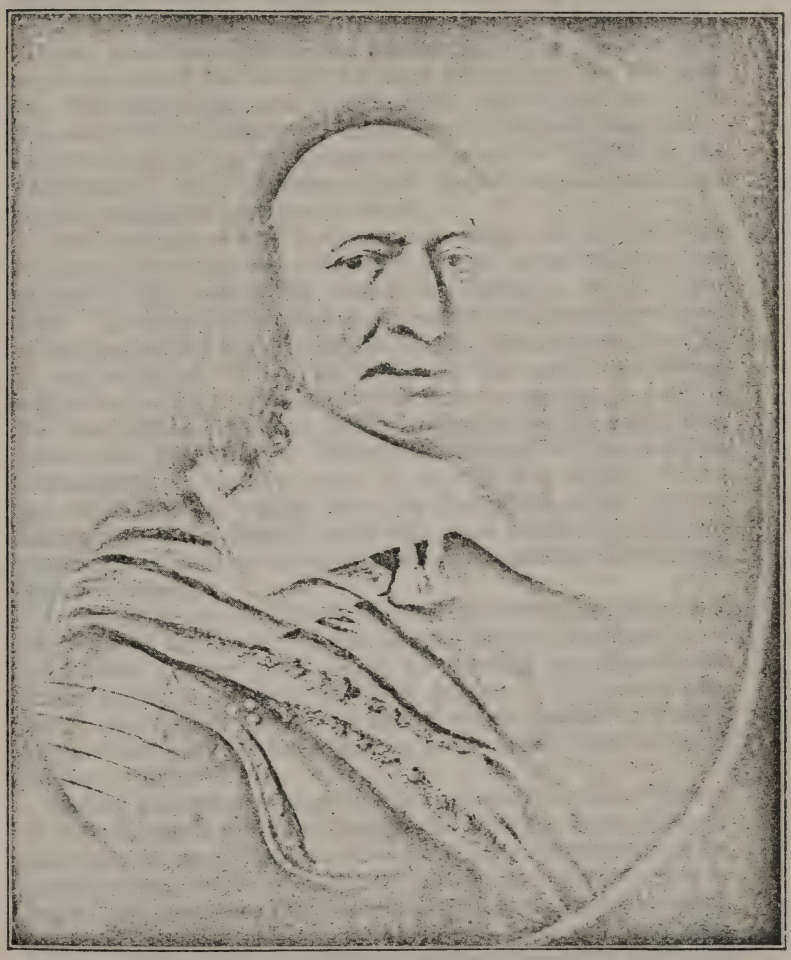
BALTIMORE
1930

PETER STUYVESANT

Peter Stuyvesant, the son of Balthazar Stuyvesant and Margaret Hardenstein, was born October 13, 1602, at Scherpenseel in Friesland.

While Peter was a boy he must have spent many of his early days at the home of his grandfather, Johann Stuyvesant, who lived at Dockum on the seacoast. It was one of the leading ports of Holland and Peter often saw the Dutch fleet ride into the harbor. Swaggering into the town came sailors from the ships which had been on foreign cruises. The sailors spoke of captured Spanish galleons, great skyscrapers of ships that towered above the smaller, faster Dutch ships, which however, were more easily handled. Those men also told of shipwrecks, of hunger and of thirst, of pirates, and of the new continent with its great rivers, and above all of a mighty river in the North. They told of the fur trade with the Redmen; comparing the climate of the North with the hot damp climate of Brazil; the silent jungles and strange savages in both places. They lorded it a bit over the old fishermen of Dockum, who taught Peter to sail a boat and how to tie knots and make sailors' hitches. In the midst of one of these lessons, perhaps young Peter forgot how to tie the knot, the secret of which had been just shown him, and gaped in wonder as he listened to the talk of one of these deep-sea sailors. The sailors were the heroes of the village. What they had done, Peter would do when he was a man, and every day that the sea ebbed and flowed the tang of it got into his blood. The strange lands beyond the horizon called him.

The Spaniard who had ruled or rather misruled the Netherlands for so many years was beaten and leaving the country. The people of Holland during the rule of Spain had kept their Church, and in a limited way, their self-government. All of these things, self-government, church and national rights now became the rights of every free citizen. When they were the common property of all men, and did not have to be worked or fought for, nobody cared much about them. The men of Holland had fought for their freedom, liberty and religion and won. After the peace they began to fight for a share of the world's



GOVERNOR PETER STUYVESANT (1592–1672)
From the original in the New York Historical Society

request seems to have been granted, for probably as early as May 13, 1643, he was acting Governor on the Island of Curacao and adjacent islands. On January 14, 1644, it was resolved to go to the assistance of the Dutch colonists of the Island of St. Martin, then menaced by the Portuguese. On April 16, the siege was raised but during the siege Stuyvesant lost his right leg. He discharged certain old sailors and soldiers with this comment: "It is difficult to catch hares with unwilling dogs". After burying his leg in Curacao he returned to Holland on the "Milkmaid". On November 9, 1644, she was forced to put into port in Ireland, on account of a storm.

That the fight at St. Martin was not decisive is shown by the following quotation from Braeden Raedt, which was written in 1649 at the time of the famous Remonstrance of the Eight Men: "Is not this the same Stuyvesant who sometime before attempted to take Fort St. Martin for the Company and lost a leg in the attempt? When we broke up the siege and retired without effecting anything, only because his leg was shot off by the first cannon shot from Fort St. Martin, we left everything behind, also Peter's leg". This attack against Stuyvesant seems unwarranted. He never tried to capture the Island. All he did, or tried to do, was to drive the Portuguese away from the Dutch part of the Island which they were attacking. This he accomplished, and for this service was later sent to New Netherland as Governor.

Upon his return to Holland he went to Alphen and stayed at the house of his brother-in-law, Samuel Bayard, the husband of Stuyvesant's sister Ann. Here he courted his sister-in-law Judith Bayard. About a year later, August 15, 1645, he married her in the French Church at Breda, where her father Lazare Bayard had probably been Rector, as the family lived at Breda for many years.

Shortly after his marriage he was appointed Governor General of New Netherland. The commission from the States-General also included his old command of Curacao and adjacent islands, as well as the new one of the New Netherlands. TheDutch West India Company also added the new province in their commission. This indicates that his service up to this time had been satisfactory. What had actually happened was probably that while the Brazilian Colony was still a profitable venture, he left it to take up his new post at Curacao; therefore he was in no way connected with the final disaster and loss of the greater part of the colony to the Portuguese. In Curacao, though he won no great victory, at least he stopped the aggressions of the Portu-

guese, the new enemy of the Dutch, and retained his province intact against foreign invasion.

Peter Stuyvesant left Texel Harbor on December 24, 1646, to take up his duties in New Netherland and landed at New Amsterdam, May 27, 1647, stopping on the way at Curacao. New Amsterdam had been reduced by Indian Wars to a bare existence. The English on the East were encroaching on the Company's lands. From the North the Indians aroused by the stupid policy of his predecessor, Kieft, were on the war path burning, pillaging and destroying the outlying settlements. The Island of Manhattan and the fort at Albany still held out but were in a poor position for defense. Not only the physical condition of the colony but the diplomatic relations with its neighbors had been neglected by Kieft for reasons of policy, or by force of other circumstances until he found himself with nothing to fight with and surrounded by opponents who were too strong for him.

The Dutch West India Company was unpopular through the misrule of its governors, and bankrupt through the bad management of its affairs and neglect on its own part.

The English were in control of all Long Island, east of Oyster Bay. On the main land they held all of Connecticut east of Stamford, with the exception of a few acres of land still held by the Dutch at Hartford around their fort. In the meantime the colony on the Delaware was neglected and isolated; ripe to fall into the hands of the Swedes who were already on the river.

To sum up briefly, Kieft turned over to Stuyvesant the Island of Manhattan, the tip end of Long Island lying west of Oyster Bay, the possession of which was disputed by the English; a lonely fort at Hartford surrounded by English; a short strip of main-land along Long Island Sound from Greenwich south to Hellgate; the fort at Albany with less than sixty yards of property about it, but even the ownership of this was being questioned by Van Rensselaer. There were also in dispute the stupid claims of Massachusetts to the upper part of the Hudson. There was also delivered an isolated outpost on the Delaware. These are all that Kieft was in actual possession of. He turned them over to his successor, Peter Stuyvesant.

While Kieft left his successor few actual assets he did leave a fine assortment of disputes, law suits, and important problems. Among them were: first, and pressing for settlement, the ever increasing encroachments of the English; the ever present troubles with the Indians; the demands of the inhabitants for a more liberal government; the demand of the traders for free

THE

CONDITIONS FOR NEW-PLANTERS

In the Territories of His ROYAL HIGHNESS

THE

DUKE OF YORK

THE Purchases are to be made from the *Indian Sachims* and to be Recorded before the *Governour*.

The Purchasers are not to pay for their liberty of purchasing to the *Governour*.

The Purchasers are to set out a Town, and Inhabit together.

No Purchaser shall at any time contract for himself with any *Sachim*, without consent of his Associates: or special Warrant from the *Governour*?

The Purchasers are free from all manner of Assessments or Rates for five years after their Town-plot is set out, and when the five years are expired, they shall only be liable to the publick Rates, and Payments according to the Custom of other Townships both *English* and *Dutch*.

All Lands thus Purchased, and possest shall remain to the Purchasers, and their Heires, as free Lands to dispose of as they please.

In all Territories of his ROYAL HIGHNES, Liberty of Conscience is allowed, Provided such Liberty is not converted to Licentiousness, or the disturbance of others in the exercise of the Protestant Religion.

The several Townships have liberty to make their peculiar Laws, and Deciding all small Causes within themselves.

The Lands which I intend shall be first Planted, are those upon the West side of *Hudson-River*, at, or adjoyning to the *Sopes*, but if any number of men sufficient for two or three, or more Towns, shall desire to plant upon any other Lands they shall have all due encouragement proportionable to their Quality, and undertakings.

Every Township is Obliged to pay their *Minister*, according to such agreement as they shall make with him, and no man to refuse his Proportion, the *Minister* being elected by the Major part of the Householders Inhabitants of the *Town*.

Every Township hath the free choice of all their officers both Civil, and Military, and Men who shall take the Oath of Allegiance to his *Majesty*, and are not Servants, or [illegible] but are admitted to enjoy *Town-Lots* are esteemed freemen of the Jurisdiction, [illegible] cannot forfeit the same without due process in Law.

R. Nicolls.

BROADSIDE ISSUED BY GOVERNOR RICHARD NICOLLS IN 1665
Offering Inducements to Planters to Settle in the Province of New York.
New York Historical Society Collection

trade. The distrust and hatred of the Dutch West India Company by the inhabitants made Stuyvesant's job more difficult.

Besides, the Dutch West India Company was bankrupt. Due in part to the bad management of its agents in New Netherland and Brazil, but chiefly due to the fact that since the peace with Spain, the chief source of the Company's revenues, out of which it had paid dividends, was cut off. This was the capture of the Spanish gold ships from Mexico and Peru. The Company also had been foolish in its corporate policies. Lacking funds to plant colonies in the New Netherland, the Company had granted to Melyn and Van Rensselaer certain sovereign and feudal rights in the colony.

If the Company had stood back of these grants to the patroons, Melyn would have been sovereign of the port of New York with his stronghold on Staten Island, free from import and export duties and Van Rensselaer, lord of the fur trade at Albany in control of the river and the source of supply, with strongholds up and down the river where he could levy tolls like the old feudal barons on the Rhine. There is no doubt that the rights to these two patroonships were legally given and granted by the Dutch West India Company. Neither is there any question that in so doing the Company had sold its birthright for a mess of pottage. If these grants were honestly lived up to on the Company's part, New Amsterdam would have been the vassal of these two great feudal lords.

Kieft had fought these claims of the patroons probably because he was told to do so. Melyn had rights to all he claimed and yet his title, though in order, properly granted by the Dutch West India Company was denied by Kieft, the Company's agent in this country. The only explanation is that the Dutch West India Company had made a grant, the importance of which it did not realize at the time.

Having granted these rights, the Company could not openly demand them back, but relied on its agent to nullify the grant. Instructions to this effect must have been sent to Kieft. Melyn was largely responsible for Kieft's recall. His protest, with those of the colonists, produced the desired result. The appointment of Stuyvesant as Governor followed.

When Stuyvesant arrived in New York, he was received with open arms—everybody had had a hard time; the farmers had been either murdered by the Indians or burned out and had no farms. The burghers of New York were on the verge of financial ruin and afraid of the Indians. The traders had no customers to buy their goods. The efforts of the Dutch West India

Company to get trade in competition with the traders made matters worse and increased the unpopularity of the Company with the traders.

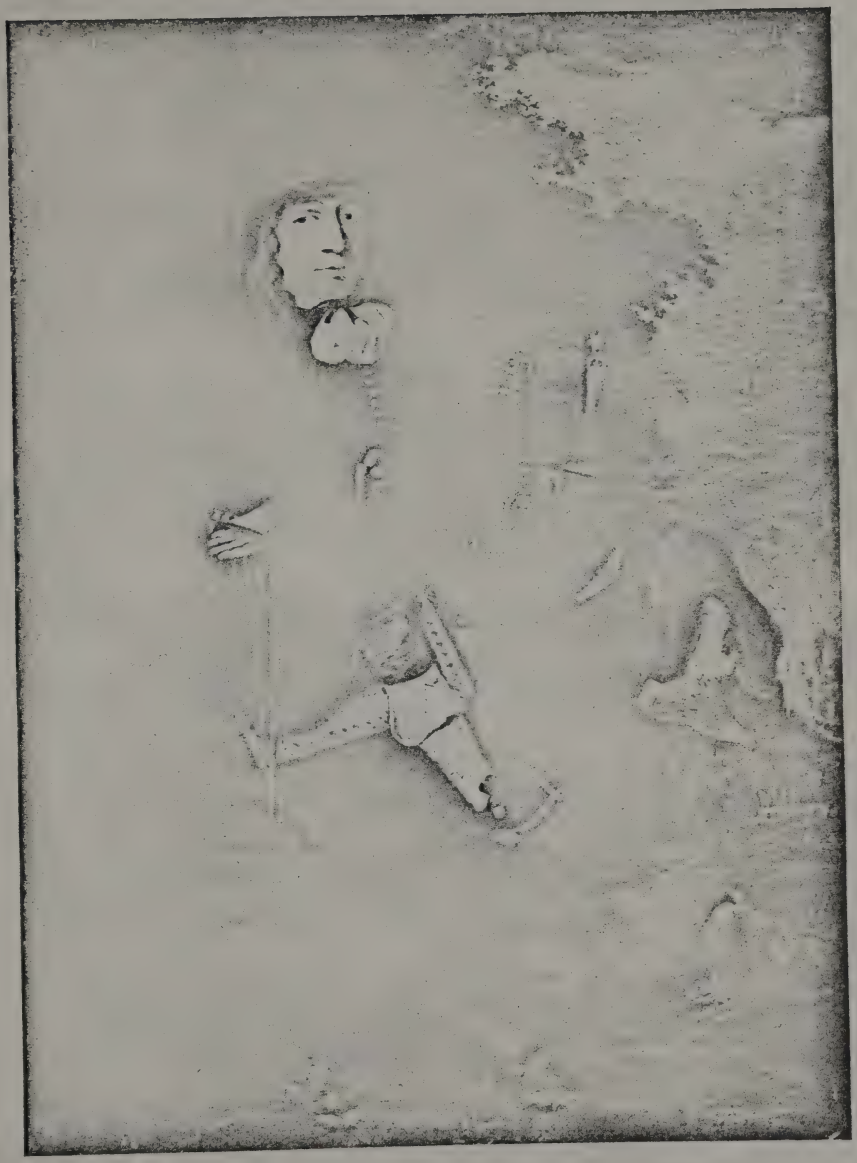
Everybody hoped Stuyvesant would build up what was lacking. Recolonize the devastated lands, get extensions of credit from the Company for those who owed money, renew trade, drive out the Indians, the English and the Swedes, and restore prosperity and peace.

Melyn was charmed with the idea of having a Governor to whom he could pour out his tale of woe, which he did at once with no sparing of terms as regards Kieft. Stuyvesant listened to his story and then to that of Kieft. Then came Dominie Bogardus with more tales about Kieft. Again Stuyvesant heard Kieft's side. In the end Stuyvesant who was what we would call a "party man" in these days, shipped all the warring factions home on the "Princess Amelia", so that they could take their fights and squabbles to the high court in Holland. Fate ruled otherwise, and with the exception of Melyn and a few passengers and sailors the passengers and crew of the "Amelia" went to the highest court of all on the rocks of the Bristol Channel.

By giving Kieft's rule a coat of white-wash, and by refusing to give his enemies redress, Stuyvesant took on his shoulders all of the troubles of Kieft's administration. The reason he did this was due to Stuyvesant's unwillingness to establish a precedent by which if a Governor were recalled his successor could have the right to decide and pass as a judge upon the actions of his predecessor. Stuyvesant argued logically that the proper place to pass on the merits of these disputes was in Holland. In the meantime, Kieft's legal decrees, the most important of which was the ousting of Melyn from his patroonship on Staten Island, must stay in force subject to an appeal to Holland.

Stuyvesant did not have to wait long before the disputes he had inherited from his predecessor began to crop up. The colonists, having been successful in obtaining the recall of one Governor, now planned to go a step farther. It seemed that by getting the recall of a Governor, all they were going to accomplish was to get another Governor who backed his predecessor. The radicals then determined that they would make an attempt not only to get Stuyvesant recalled, but to have the Dutch West India Company removed at the same time.

In 1648, or early in 1649, it was suggested to Stuyvesant that if there were sent to Holland an account of just what the colony had to offer new emigrants, there would be a rush of colonists to New Amsterdam. Stuyvesant was heartily in favor of this plan



NICHOLAS WILLIAM STUYVESANT (1648–1698)
Son of Governor Peter Stuyvesant. From the original in the New York Historical Society

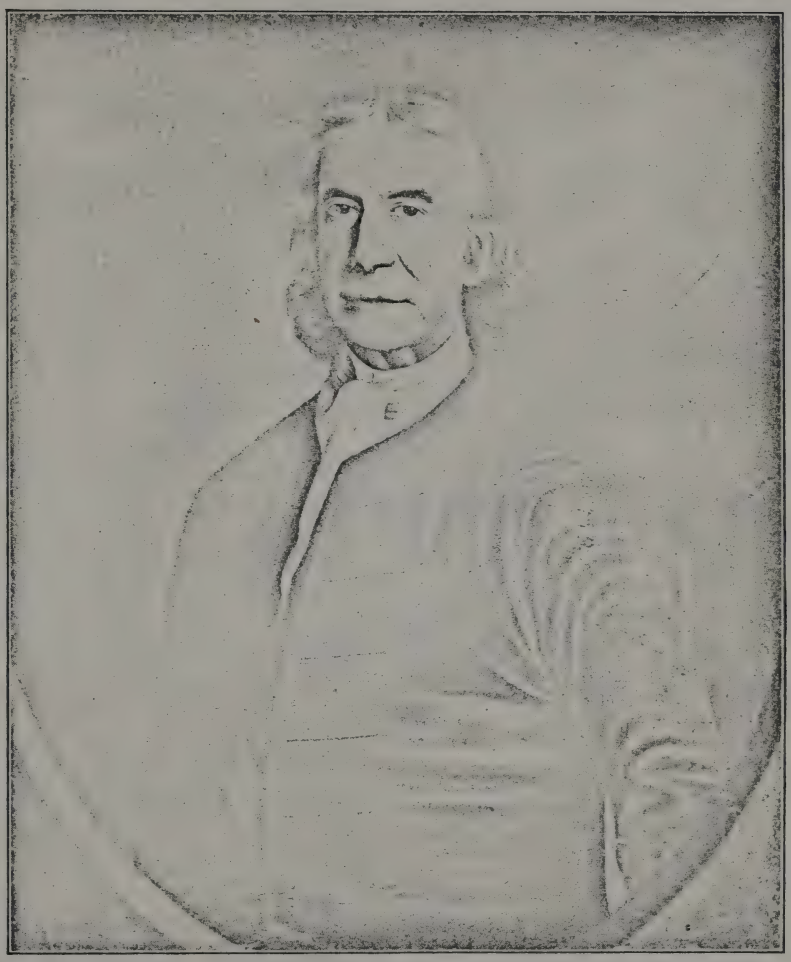
when it was broached to him by Adrien Van der Donck. So a glowing prospectus was written about the climate and natural advantages of the colony. This prospectus still is the best description of the possibilities of the port of New Amsterdam and the surrounding country.

Without Stuyvesant's knowledge, Van der Donck got in touch with the malcontents in the colony who were opposed to the Dutch West India Company. To them it appeared an opportune time to voice their grievances against the Company, using the constructive force of the prospectus, adding a chapter devoted to politics, attacking the Company and its agent. Van der Donck's passage was to be paid back to Holland to present the prospectus, or "vertoogh" as it was called, to the States-General. He went from house to house and gathered all of the political dirt he could, putting it in the second part of his work. Its object was, if possible, to make such a furor in Holland that Stuyvesant and the Dutch West India Company would be removed and the Company's property taken over by the Dutch Government, or States-General. The malcontents of the colony who were for the most part large traders and landowners, expected to profit by the change. To their minds one thing must be done; the Company and its monopolies must be removed.

When Stuyvesant found that what he had thought was going to aid the Company in its plans of colonization, was really an instrument to be used for the destruction of the Company, and the seizure of its property and his removal from office, he acted in his usual energetic manner; seized the papers and threw those who aided in their collection, into jail on the charge of *lèse majesté*.

Too late, however, as Van der Donck's passage was paid for by the Eight Men, and they had signed the second part of the prospectus, attacking the rule of the Company and its agents, and two of their number were delegated to present the remonstrance in Holland; namely, Jacob Van Couwenhoven and Jan Evertse Bout. To make matters worse, Melyn whom Stuyvesant had banished from the colony, returned just at this time with an order for Stuyvesant's recall, signed and sealed by the States-General of Holland. He started to read this order in Church where Stuyvesant and his family were among the congregation. How far he got in his reading is not stated but it *is* stated that Stuyvesant stumped up on his one good, and one bad leg, and tore the paper out of his hands so that the great seal fell off.

In Matthew and Luke, we read the parable of the man who serves two masters. Peter had two masters, the Dutch West



GERARDUS STUYVESANT (1690–1777)
Son of Nicholas William Stuyvesant and Elizabeth Slechtenhorst. From the original in the New York Historical Society

India Company and the States-General of Holland. He had commissions from both. The Gospels of Matthew and Luke state that one man cannot serve two masters. Nor was Peter able to; his master was the Dutch West India Company. The States-General, the loose confederaton of the Dutch provinces, was never his master; he served the great trading Company in its present reverses as he had done in the days of prosperity. Also he served the Company because the States-General had delegated their powers to the Company.

At least twice did he disobey the orders of their High and Mightiness, the States-General of Holland, but never as far as I have been able to find out, the orders of the Dutch West India Company.

So Stuyvesant was ordered home. Who could carry out the order? Nobody but Stuyvesant and he chose to stay, as no successor was appointed. He served in a dual capacity the Company and the States-General. The Company had not ordered him home; therefore he would not return to Holland at the orders of the States-General, his lesser masters, but if he saw fit he might send an agent. In the meantime, he still ruled for both his masters. Melyn's claims now supported by the Dutch Government would be filed if Melyn desired. They were filed and treated just as they had been in the past, not to Melyn's advantage; in fact, his heirs later filed the same claims after the English were in control of New York, with the same results.

All writers of history have stressed the claims in the second part of Van der Donck's work as an infant scream of liberty and freedom. This is not the case. It was an effort to do away with a monopoly of trade that affected the pocket books of those who protested. If the Dutch West India Company were removed, those who protested had only to contend with the Dutch Government, and not a trading Company. In addition, the docks, warehouses, and other improvements of the Dutch West India Company would be public property.

And so the protest went to Holland and Stuyvesant stayed in New Amsterdam, sending his agent Van Tienhoven to argue the case for him. Most historians have read the protest and quote wisely from its pages to the detriment of the Government, of the Dutch West India Company and of Stuyvesant, but were either too weary or too biased in their view to read the able rebuttal of Van Tienhoven, a document much more able than the scurrilous attack on Stuyvesant and the Company, contained in the second part of Van der Donck's work.

In a slow Dutch way the rebuttal sank into the minds of their

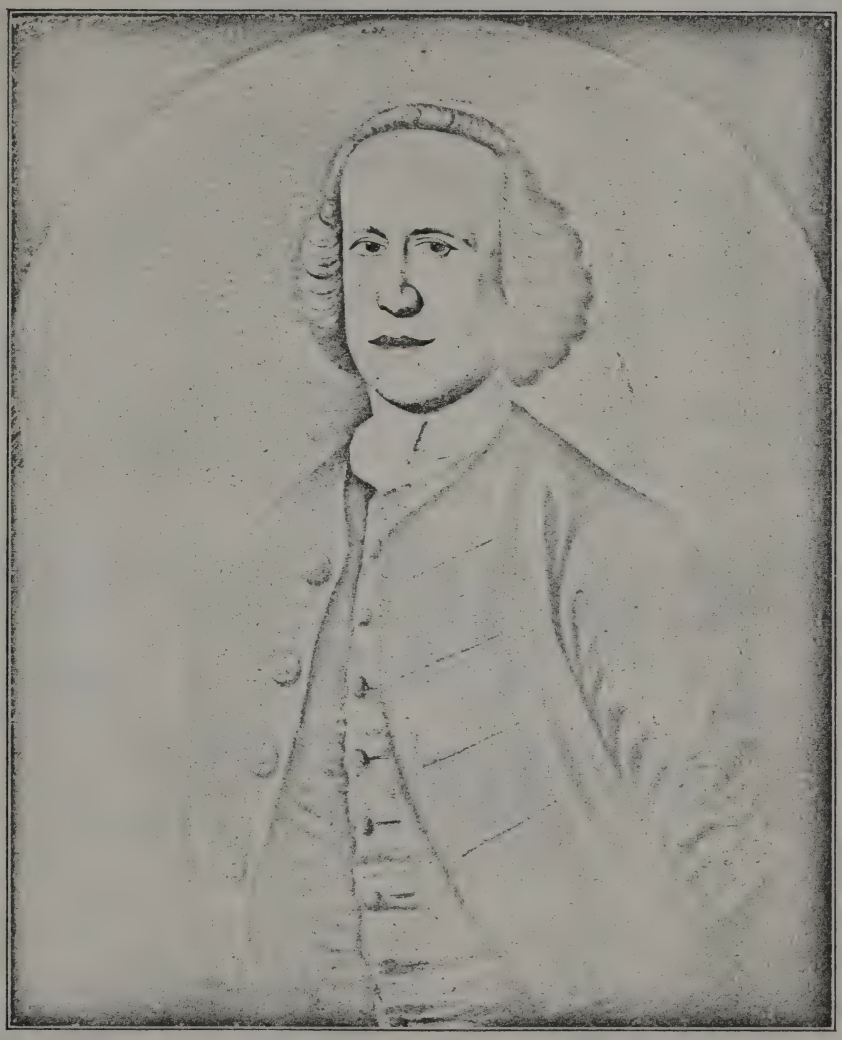
High and Mightiness, the States-General. At first, on reading the remonstrance, they once more recalled Stuyvesant, and in this case it is certain he got positive instructions from the Dutch West India Company not to allow himself to be recalled. Shortly thereafter, their High and Mightiness reversed themselves and allowed Stuyvesant to continue in office, with the following suggestions; that New Amsterdam should have, as far as its local affairs were concerned, a form of popular government to advise the governor, and that New Amsterdam should be an open port save for the Company's import and export duties. What Stuyvesant did with this order and how he made use of it, we will see later. As war was coming on with England, the decision may have been influenced by this. Both the Company and the States-General thought it unwise to change horses while crossing the stream.

The question of the Vertoogh having been settled, Stuyvesant had time to take up other matters. Among the first was the question of the patroonship of Van Rensselaer, Melyn having gone back to Holland once more to argue some fine point of law or flaw in his title.

Van Rensselaer at Albany had a man very much of the same kidney as Stuyvesant, in the person of Van Slechtenhorst, his agent. There, if ever, Greek met Greek. Hardheaded, obstinate, they met. One backed by the rights of the patroon, the other by the Dutch West India Company. When Stuyvesant went to Albany and forced his orders down Van Slechtenhorst's throat, the Indians who were the friends of Van Rensselaer and who had been well treated by him and his agents, stood in wonder as "Old Silver Leg," with a handful of soldiers dictated his terms to Van Slechtenhorst. One word of encouragement, and a mob of Redmen would have been down on Stuyvesant. They, being savages, could not understand the power of the Dutch Government that was back of "Old Silver Leg," and his corporal's guard.

The encroachments about the fort at Albany that Van Rennselaer had put up were forcibly removed; the patroon's feudal castle at Barren Island was destroyed and free and unrestricted trade up and down the Hudson restored. For a time Van Slechtenhorst languished in jail, if a man of his character can be said to languish. And then he did what was more characteristic. He escaped from his jailors and once more ruled the patroon's colony, deprived of some of his power, but still defiant.

Stuyvesant was a soldier with the soldier's contempt of civil government but he was a shrewd politician and never made



NICHOLAS WILLIAM STUYVESANT (1722–1780)
Son of Gerardus Stuyvesant and Judith Bayard. From the original in the New York Historical Society

the same mistake twice. The protest of the Eight Men in Van der Donck's paper had sunk under his skin so with seeming bad grace and in a grudging manner, for he thought it behooved the dignity of his office not to admit defeat too easily, he gave to the colony of New Amsterdam a form of local government which satisfied the citizens for the rest of his rule. Of course, the burghers were bound to take care of the repairs of the fort, the street paving, and all the municipal improvements which had been formerly charged to the Dutch West India Company. Stuyvesant traded more or less empty honors for actual benefits to the Company.

War was on with England. New Amsterdam was now an open port into which prizes were brought. Money and trade came to the colony.

New England, now that war was declared, was frightened and hesitated to attack her Dutch neighbor; the war of the mother country was not New England's. They were afraid of the Dutch Navy. In this crisis the Dutch Government did not back Stuyvesant, neither did the Dutch West India Company. If they had, the war might have been waged on this continent as well as in Europe.

Knowing the fears of the New England colonists and his own weakness due to the lack of aid from the home government, Stuyvesant made the Treaty of Hartford. This was a treaty in name, but was a truce in fact. By the terms of this treaty the boundary question was to remain in abeyance, neither side being bound in any way by the treaty, except that they were not to advance beyond the lines mentioned in the agreement. The whole matter was to be taken up at a later date in Europe or in this country and the various disputes settled. The pious men of New England breathed a sigh of relief and began stealing and encroaching as soon as the fear of the Dutch was removed by peace.

Stuyvesant's dealings with the Swedes were more successful. With a force of 700 men he sailed into the Delaware in 1655. For once and only once he got aid from Holland. The warship Waag or Ballance, was sent over to aid him in this expedition. On arriving at Fort Casimir (Newcastle), Stuyvesant demanded its surrender, giving the Swedes very liberal terms, which they accepted and the Dutch rule on the Delaware was reëstablished without bloodshed.

In his absence, however, the Indians again went on the warpath. The trouble started when a war party of River Indians landed on Manhattan Island on their way to attack the Long

Island Indians. Some of the party camped about where the City Hall now stands and appeared in the early morning on the streets of New Amsterdam. An Indian squaw caught stealing peaches from Van Dyke's peach tree, was shot and killed by Van Dyke. In retaliation he was killed by an arrow. Another burgher was tomahawked before the Indians were driven out of town by the guard. Then they went to Governor's Island, but didn't stay there long. The people of New Amsterdam spent a bad night in watching the red glow of the burning farms and settlements on the Jersey and Staten Island shores. Many prisoners were taken and carried to the back country in captivity. When Stuyvesant returned, the question was raised as to whether the Indians should be attacked or efforts made to make peace and get the return of prisoners. The latter plan was followed. Stuyvesant argued rightly that the first offence was on the part of the inhabitants. His decision not to retaliate was wise and the captives were finally returned. In 1655 the Indians attacked the settlement on the Esopus. Again many prisoners were taken and considerable damage done. In this case Stuyvesant vigorously attacked the Indians, but the Indians renewed their attack in 1658 and 1663, with the same results and were forced to sue for peace. From that time on the Indian troubles of New Amsterdam and the neighboring country were at an end. The French and the Indians burned Schenectady, and during the Revolution the English and the Indians came down the Wyoming Valley, pillaging and massacring the inhabitants. Both attacks were planned by white men. The Indians had lost their initiative. They were still a terror to the frontier settler but lacked the courage or energy to attack a fortified position or a large settlement unless they were backed by white men and troops.

In matters of religion and political matters, the Company was more liberal than their agent. The Company was constantly writing and instructing him to be more open-minded. He was very loath to carry out these instructions. In his capacity as head of the civil government, he was responsible for the Dutch Church. Being also an ardent supporter of that Church, he was at times narrow in his views where other religious beliefs were involved. He argued, if the Church was the Church of the recognized Government, why should not all men bow to it as they did to their Government? In political matters he was a soldier with a soldier's contempt of civilian government.

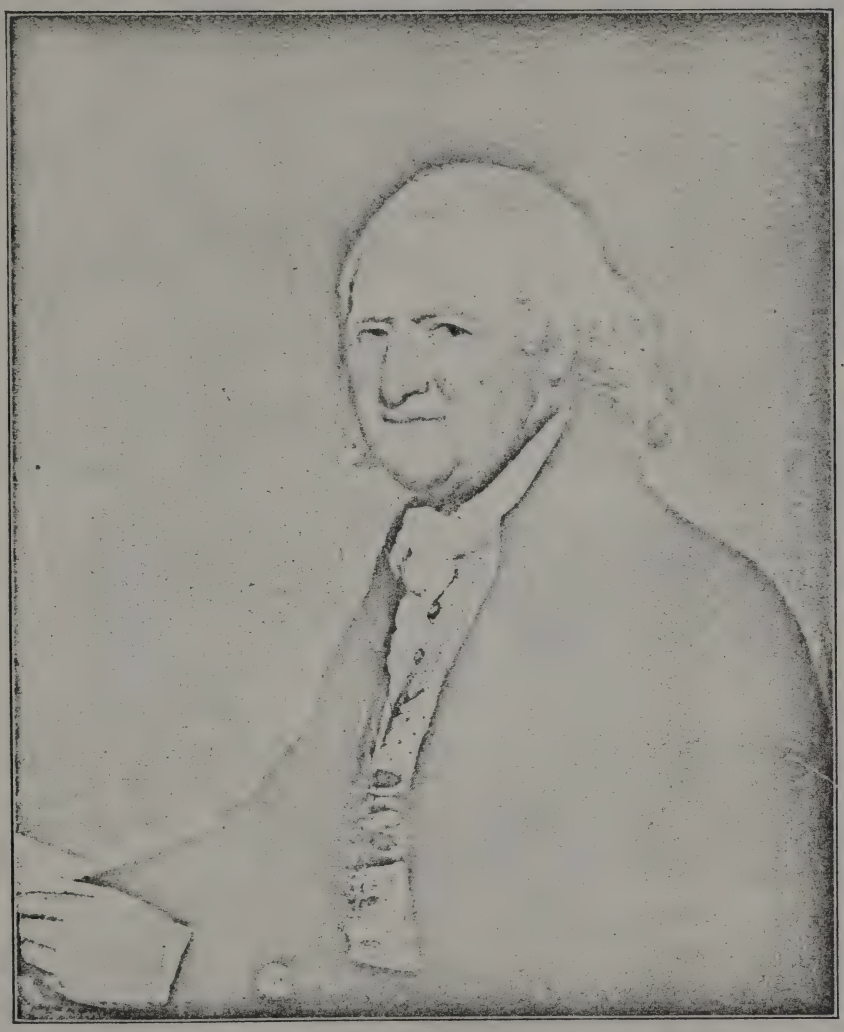
Stuyvesant has been criticized for treating Quakers harshly. He had to preserve order in the colony and keep peace with his

neighbors. In his opinion, a Quaker was a criminal in all of the colonies. This was not so much on account of his religious beliefs, as his political views. Stuyvesant made treaties with the other colonies in which it was agreed to extradite criminals. Quakers were in this class. The punishments that Stuyvesant imposed upon the Quakers were harsh, but much milder than those of his New England neighbors. The ordinary religious "crank" was tolerated in New Amsterdam, but a Quaker who ranted both against the church and the civil government, was a Bolshevik and persona non grata. Imagine a delinquent called before a magistrate in New York today who, when asked what he had to say for himself, delivered an oration against the government and called the magistrate a son of Belial or Beelzibub. Again imagine the congregation of St. Thomas' Church or St. Patrick's Cathedral, on a Sunday morning if suddenly two naked women should come up the aisle of the Church, and say that God's truth was naked and so were they. A quite obvious fact, at least in one respect. Stuyvesant was harsh on the Quakers. He respected the office he held and made others do so.

Up to this point the more important points of Stuyvesant's rule have been taken up in detail. A viewpoint that seemed logical has been suggested. The results of his rule still remain to be analyzed.

During his rule peace and prosperity came to the people of New Amsterdam, not through a republican or popular form of government, but by a dictatorship. Certain powers were allowed the local authorities, the governor having the power to veto. Under this government, the colony was ruled fairly, and much more liberally than its neighbors in New England, as is clearly shown by the great migration from the New England colonies that left that land of "freedom" to swear allegiance to the foreign power of the Dutch. With little or no backing from the home government, Stuyvesant ruled the strange colony one-third Dutch, one-third French, one-third English. He ruled the colony just as he said the day he landed, "as a father would his children". At first the children had to be content with what he told them they could and could not do. Later, as they grew older he was willing to take them more and more into his confidence.

Stuyvesant directed and governed. No detail was too small for his attention. He lectured, and scolded the population about the condition of the streets; the wooden chimneys in their houses; the schools for their children; the fort; the docks. In fact, it was his hand that drove the engine of state. A rather wheezy,



PETRUS STUYVESANT (1727–1805)
Son of Gerardus Stuyvesant and Judith Bayard. From the original in the New York Historical Society

leaking old engine, but he got every ounce of power it was able to give.

A driver who forces men to work and do things always makes enemies. So it was in the case of Stuyvesant. Most of these enemies he made in the first years of his rule. The dirty little town objected at first to his use of soap and disinfectants. They wanted to live with the dirt, physically, morally and politically. Gradually they saw that there was reason for the tirades and lectures that their one-legged Governor was giving them. What at first seemed harsh, they now saw was really constructive, and directed towards the improvement of their colony. From being hated and feared he grew to be respected and loved by those he ruled.

When Stuyvesant arrived in New Amsterdam in 1647 the population was about 700. Those able to bear arms in cases of attack numbered 100. The houses were mostly of wood and poorly built, numbering in all about 150. The streets were mere cowpaths, unpaved and filthy, where cattle and pigs wandered among the mud and garbage thrown from the houses. The inhabitants and their animals lived in squalor and dirt. Every fifth house sold wine or beer. In this respect New Amsterdam must have resembled a town in the Klondike during the gold rush of 1898.

When Stuyvesant's governorship ended in 1664, there were about 225 houses and a population of 1400. The character of the houses had vastly changed during his rule. Shabby wooden houses had been replaced by more substantial dwellings of wood and brick. Many of the streets were paved with stone. Road masters had laid out new streets and cattle and pigs no longer wandered up and down the streets. Their keeping and housing in the city limits were regulated. The throwing of garbage and filth into the streets and canals was forbidden. Rum shops were regulated and their number greatly decreased. From a dirty frontier garrison town, New Amsterdam grew during Stuyvesant's rule into a thriving, clean, Dutch settlement. Nicolls, when he captured it, called it the fairest of His Majesty's possessions on the continent. Docks had sprung up on the water-front; canals were built out over the mud flats and the town had begun to push out its shore line to the deep water channel where yet more docks could be built in the future. Churches and schools had been established, and courts of law to replace the Governor's law court.

When Charles the 2nd. came to the throne of England, the Dutch who had given him a home during his exile, believed they

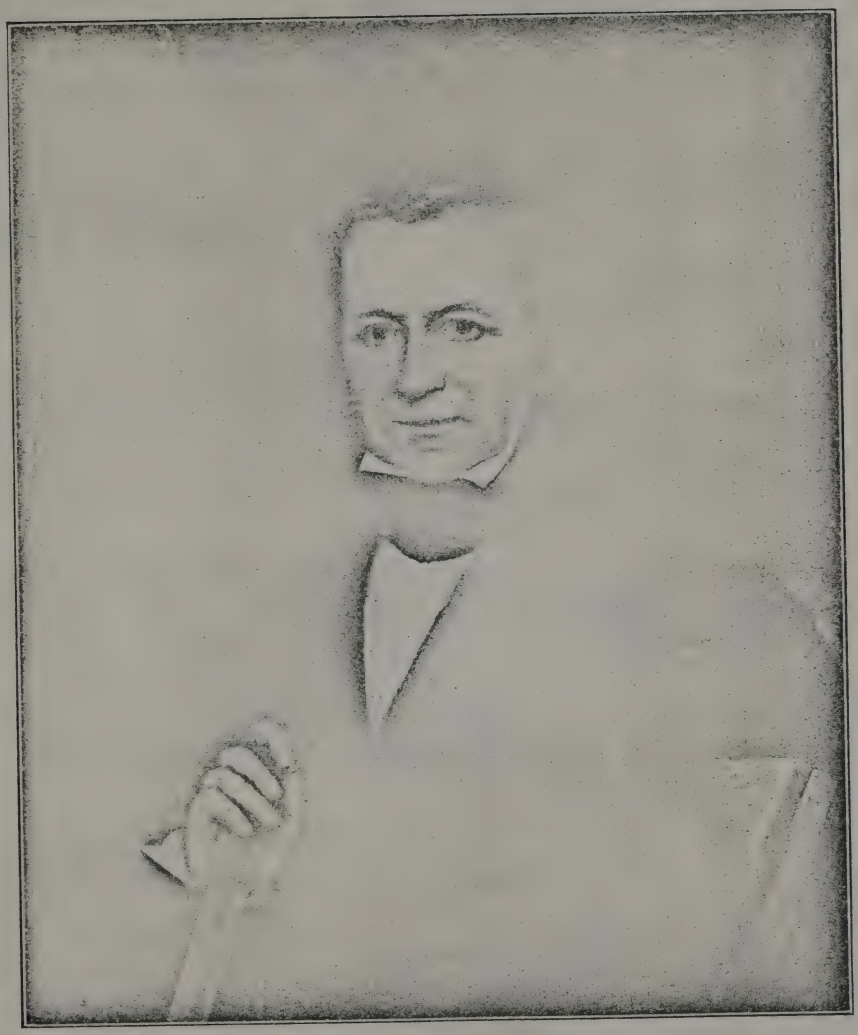
had on the throne of England a friend and ally, being persuaded by the belief that the man who owed them so much would not turn against them. In the Spring of 1664, Stuyvesant heard rumors to the effect that an English fleet was about to sail to New England with the ultimate purpose of attacking New Amsterdam. Added to these rumors, the renewed encroachments on the part of Connecticut worried him and added to his fears of a general attack on New Amsterdam by the English. The Dutch Government took the matter up with the King's Government in Great Britian. The English Government lied with regard to the nature of the expedition, stating that the fleet was going to New England to establish there a Bishop of the Church of England, and had no designs on New Amsterdam. So Stuyvesant was told to have no fears and his demands for men and arms to repel the attack and stop the encroachments of Connecticut in Westchester and Long Island were neglected as usual. With the assurance that he received from Holland with regard to the English fleet, he was instructed at the same time to go to the Esopus and finally settle the Indian troubles there. While on the Esopus on this errand, he received the report that the English fleet was in New Amsterdam. On receiving this news he hurried back to New Amsterdam. Defense was useless.

Writers with much pathos have drawn nice word pictures of Stuyvesant at this moment of his career, because here they could sob a bit and draw on their imagination with regard to the feelings of the man. And this for the most part from writers who had spent page after page in misunderstanding his acts and ridiculing his actions.

Pathos! Stuyvesant had no time for self-pity! Once he had made up his mind to surrender, he had work to do; perhaps the greatest work he ever did as the father of his children, the colony and people of New Amsterdam.

The English fleet with three companies of regular troops was in the harbor. Over on the Long Island shore were about two thousand Connecticut and Massachusetts troops enlisted for the attack on New Amsterdam.

Added to Stuyvesant's troubles was the fact that the garrison of New Amsterdam were mostly mercenaries, who, in the confusion of a general attack would be ready to profit thereby through robbery and pillage. This fear, and the certain knowledge on the part of the inhabitants that defense was useless, eliminated any help that Stuyvesant might have hoped for from the burghers or their trained bands. The townspeople were in a blue funk, clamoring for surrender.



NICHOLAS WILLIAM STUYVESANT (1769–1833)
Son of Peter Stuyvesant and Margaret Livingston. From the original in the New York Historical Society

If Stuyvesant had consulted his own wishes, and best interests, he would have made a show of defense, the result of which would have been to make a second Arcadia of the Province. The fear of retaliation was all that held back the greedy English and their more greedy New England allies. Had he been able, by desperate courage and some freak of fortune, to hold out for a week or two, the redmen from the back country would have come in large numbers to be in at the final sacking of New Amsterdam. Stuyvesant might have died a hero or gone back to Holland to receive praise for a stubborn defense against great odds and yet the colony of New Netherland pillaged and robbed by its neighbors and the English would have suffered from the blow for a hundred years or more. That the English troops were ready to plunder and steal is clearly shown by what took place a few weeks later on the Delaware. Nicolls the commander who was a man of high character could and did control his troops. But if resistance had been met, he would either have been unable or unwilling to control his troops in the event of victory. Certainly if the Indians who were hovering about New Amsterdam had joined the fray, they would have been allowed their pound of flesh by their English allies.

Stuyvesant held out as long as he dared, his object being to get the best terms he could. If the inhabitants had shown a little more backbone, the terms which he finally got, favorable as they were, might have been more so. There was little more that Stuyvesant could do in this country. He went to Holland shortly after the surrender to face charges brought by those who were very silent when there was fighting to be done, but who now that it was all over, were very ready to criticize and find fault. Stuyvesant's answer to these charges is in another way an answer to his critics. The dignity of the answer and his willingness to take blame and responsibility is not the work of a braggart or blusterer. On page after page, fact after fact is given clearly, but without malice or rancor. The blame is placed where it belongs; on the shoulders of the Dutch West India Company in not sending over adequate supplies and men.

One more duty he lived to perform for the merchants of New York after he had answered the charges brought against him to the satisfaction of the States-General. He went to London as soon as peace was restored in 1667, and secured for the merchants of Holland and New York free trade between the two continents.

Most historians end the history of Peter Stuyvesant with his stamping out of the fort at New Amsterdam. Another picture comes to my mind. That of a vigorous old man, not broken in

spirit nor bitter in mind, returning from Holland to spend his last days on his Bowery, bringing with him fruit trees to plant in his orchard. The last survivor of these trees stood on the corner of 11th Street and Third Avenue as late as 1869. The house he lived in was a quaint two story Dutch house, in front of which was planted a formal Dutch garden. There I like to think of him spending the last years of his life among his trees and flowers. Here in the garden, on a pleasant evening , his friends would drop in on the Governor. Nicolls, the English Governor, came often. As these two sit in the garden in friendly conversation, the new ruler and the old, we see how New Amsterdam, without bloodshed became New York. Not conquered by a hostile race, but absorbed by a stronger people, what was good in Dutch civilization being improved by the more aggressive spirit of the English.

Peter Stuyvesant died Jan. 29, 1671/2 and was survived by two sons.

1. Balthazar, baptized Oct. 13, 1647; moved to Curacao; died 1675.
2. Nicholas William, baptized Dec. 22, 1648, died 1698. Will dated Aug. 13, 1698. Married 1st Maria Beekman. The children of this marriage all died young and unmarried. Married 2nd, Elizabeth Slechtenhorst. She married 2nd, John Sydenham, very shortly after the death of Stuyvesant, Nov. 4, 1698.

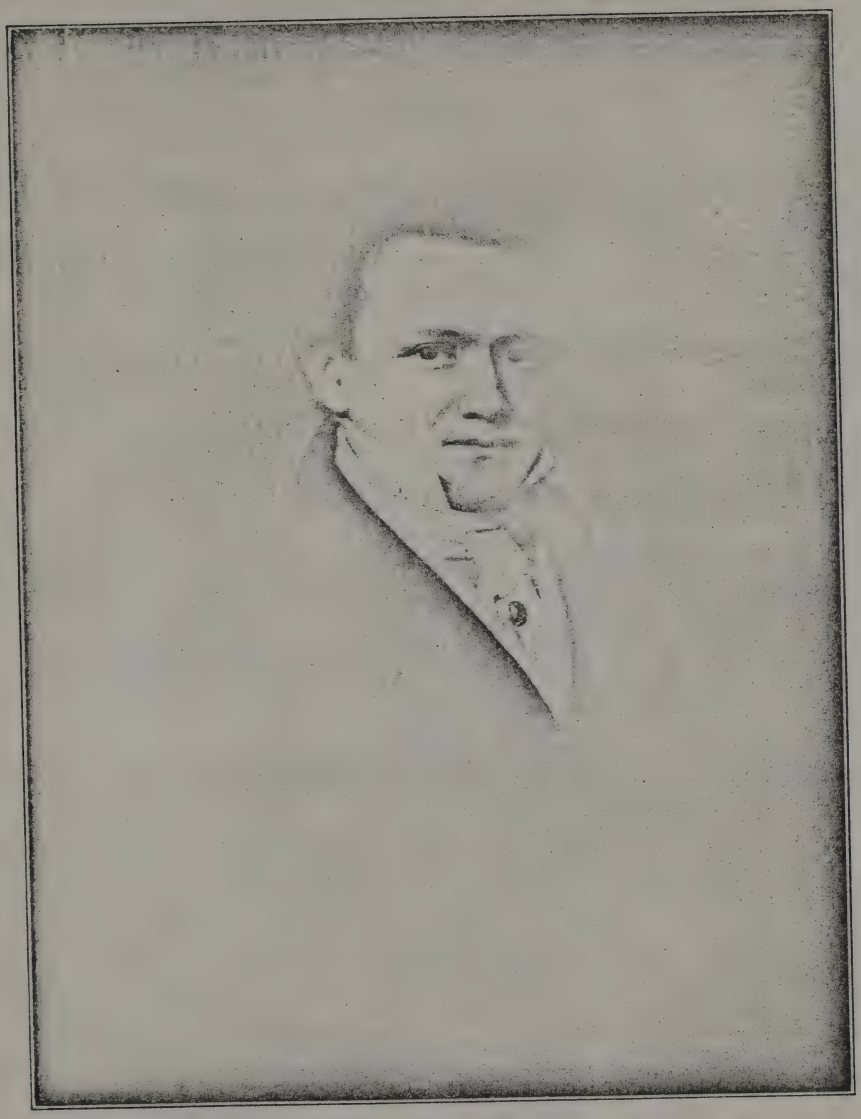
SECOND GENERATION

BALTHAZAR LAZARUS STUYVESANT, the oldest son of the Governor, was baptized Oct. 13, 1647; he was one of the signers of the petition to surrender the city to the English 1664. (N. Y. Colonial Doc. II, 249, 423.) He was furnished with a plantation at Curacao in the West Indies by his father, and he arrived there Dec. 11, 1664; (Calendar of Dutch MSS, page 334). He made frequent visits to New York and was in the City May 24, 1674. Family tradition states that he was dissatisfied with the surrender of the Province to the Crown of England. He removed to the Island of St. Thomas, W. I., and died at Novis before his mother made her will Jan. 29, 1678. (Valentine's Manual, 1851, p. 444). He married in the West Indies and had two daughters born at St. Eustace.

Judith, borne 1674, married ——— Edsall
Catharine, born 1675, married Thomas Tassamaker.

Wife's name unknown. He died before Jan. 29, 1678. (N. Y. Hist. Soc. Col. 2d Series, I, 455; Dunlap's History of New York, Vol. II, Appendix, page 39).

As regards the daughters of Balthazar Stuyvesant, it seems likely that they returned to New York after their father's death.



PETER STUYVESANT (1796–1860)
Son of Nicholas William Stuyvesant and Catharine Livingston Reade.
From the original in the New York Historical Society

NICHOLAS WILLIAM STUYVESANT, son of Peter Stuyvesant and Judith Bayard, was baptized Dec. 22, 1648, and had for sponsors the Directors of the Dutch West India Co. He married first, on May 12, 1672, Maria Beekman, daughter of William Beekman; married second, Sept. 15, 1681, Elizabeth Van Slechtenhorst, daughter of Gerrit Van Slechtenhorst. She was either married to a man called Sydenham before she married Stuyvesant or just after Stuyvesant died. A letter in her handwriting reads as follows:

"Memoranda van Klaverack.

At the time that Governor Andros was Governor for the first time, my father Slichtenhorst bought land from the savages, Red Hawk, the savage, and more others which is called Klaverack. Jan Hendrick Salberge also had a piece of land which was situated nearby, so they have a deed together, each half of the land; now as my father Slichtenhorst was on his deathbed, he thought it well to leave this land to his children; firstly he gives to Alida Slichtenhorst sixty acres. Cato Hillegondt the remaining, to my brother Gerret Slichtenhorst and Elizabeth money and gold; now, as Gerret Slichtenhorst was going to Holland, he left his land to me by testament and deed of gift, which Geradts has now; Gonda was compelled to transfer hers to Sydenham, as he gave her no peace. When I had been unhappily married to Sydanham for about a year and a half, I come along the Broad Way, go where . . . . Pamerton lived, sees me passing, calls me and asks me whether I was making a fool of him; I said that I did not know for what, and that, never in my life, had I spoken one word to him or against him; well, he says here is a writing or deed of gift of Klaverack to be signed; I said that I knew nothing of it, that whoever had put him to work might sign it too, so I thought that Sydenham did not know I had it, as I had never told him, but had it already recorded with Mr. Sierpis, how about 4 months after I was very ill, being pregnant with Jan Syd, so he sends the sleigh to town where a party was being given by the Pamertis, and Mr. Bockly and crooked Lodloo; in the drawing room they had their fun, as they were in the middle of their sport, I had an attack, and could not speak a word and Pamerton, who had also come, did not believe but what I was dying, runs to them and says: do you sit here and are so merry, Madame Syd lies dying; at once all came out who were there and began to read; honest Lodloo, who is the contriver of all evil, his name I heard read, as I thought, but as soon as it was done, Syd takes a seat in the bed to hold me up, while Pameter wrote with my hand, also it is said that they have asked me whether I did this of my free will, and I should have said yes, what I do believe to be the truth, because since Pameter had spoke to me, I lived in Hell; locked up everything there was; many a time I have concealed the food for my children in the cellar under the tub, locked the cupboard that contained the food, yes, not so much as a drink of beer for myself or for the children, tied the negroes up and whipped them for nothing yes, threatened me to cut the tongue from my throat if I said anything against him; his wife was his own as long as he did not beat her to death.

* * * *

and so I have forgotten how I came into the land of Klaverack, after my brother had gone to Holland, war came with the savages, so that my sister Cato had to leave her land, Alyda was burned twice, Hillegant was also

in want of money, so that I bought these three parts without Stuyvesant's knowledge, and have paid it through neighbor Moonviele and Abram de Pister, and had Robber Liivenston, who was Secretary, write it in Stuyvesant's name, as will appear; now, as Stuyvesant was on his death bed, I have brought these transfers to him, and said that he should dispose of them as he thought good, it is bought and paid for; so he had made it over to me by a deed of gift.

Elis Stuyvesant."

Nicholas William Stuyvesant's will is dated Aug. 13, 1698. His second wife died April 20, 1738.

Nicholas William Stuyvesant was a Captain of Militia 1684, and Alderman 1684, and his signature appears on addresses made to the King in 1687, 1690, and in the Leisler troubles 1689, about a year after making his will August 13, 1689.

By his first wife, Maria Beekman, he had the following children, all of whom died young:

1. Judith, baptized Oct. 22, 1673, died before Dec. 5, 1694.
2. Petrus, baptized July19, 1676, Died young.
3. Catherina, baptized Aug. 17, 1678. Died young.

By his second wife, Elizabeth Van Slechtenhorst, he had the following children:

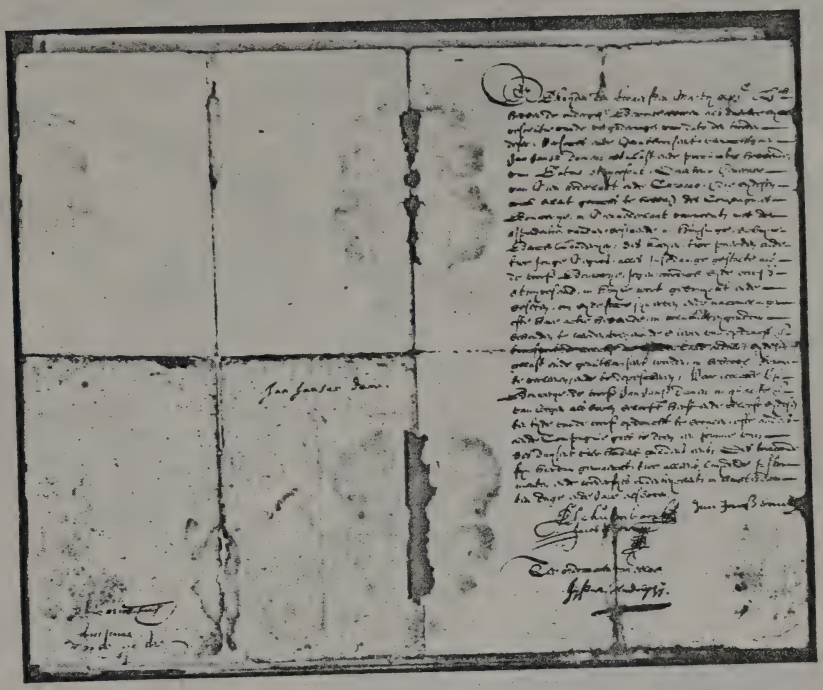
1. Petrus, baptized Dec. 26, 1683, died an infant.
2. Petrus, baptized March 21, 1685, died Dec. 11, 1705. Married and had one child, Benoni, baptized May 2, 1706. Illegitimate under the Dutch law.
3. Elizabeth, baptized March 13, 1687, died young.
4. Ann, baptized April 17, 1689; married Thomas Prichard in June 1704. She died 1759. Her husband died shortly after they were married.
5. Gerardus, baptized Oct. 25, 1691, died 1777; married March 5, 1722 Judith Bayard.

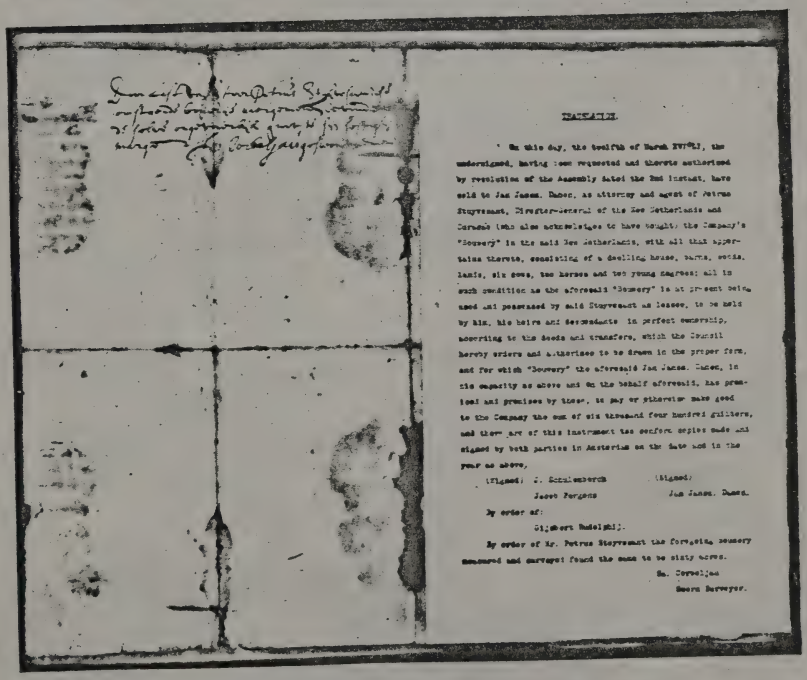
THIRD GENERATION

GERARDUS STUYVESANT, baptized Oct. 25, 1691, wa educated in New York where he was a magistrate for 30 years. He is said to have been a man of culture and interested in literary matters. He was Alderman for the Out Ward 1722, 1755, Deputy Mayor 1735, 1736, 1747. (Journal of Leg. Council, 665, Zenger's N. Y. Journal 100, Parker's N. Y. Gazette 229[2] 308[3] Captain of Militia 1738; (Doc. Hist. of N. Y. IV, 140.)

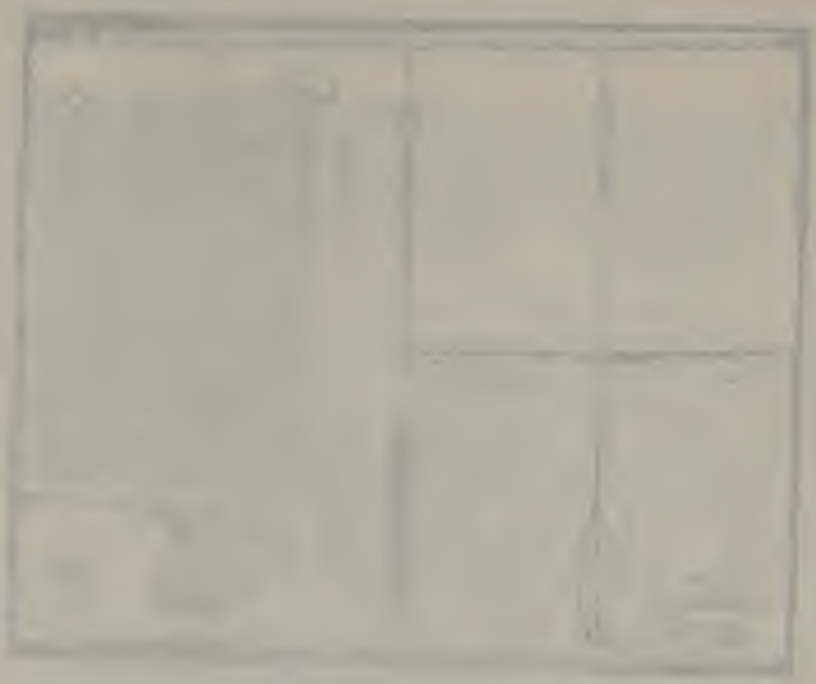
He married March 5, 1722, Judith Bayard, daughter of Balthazar Bayard and Maria Loockermans. She was 37 years old.

There are numerous references to him in contemporary publications, as one of the honored citizens of New York. For more than thirty years he was elected successively to the magistracy. He died Sept. 18, 1777.





DEED TO THE BOUWERY FARM, MARCH, 12TH, 1651
In the possession of Stuyvesant Fish, Esq.



The children of Gerardus Stuyvesant and Judith Bayard were:

1. Nicholas Wm., baptized Oct. 10, 1722, died unmarried, Sept. 28, 1780.
2. Petrus, baptized June 24, 1724, died young.
3. Gerardus, baptized July 6, 1726, died young.
4. Petrus, baptized Oct. 18, 1727, died Aug. 31, 1805, married Oct. 17, 1764, Margaret Livingston.

FOURTH GENERATION

PETRUS STUYVESANT, baptized Oct. 18, 1727, died Aug. 31, 1805, was a man of modest tastes, who employed much of his wealth for benevolent purposes. Married, Oct, 17, 1764, Margaret Livingston, born June, 1738. She died Jan. 6, 1818, daughter of Gilbert and Cornelia (Beekman) Livingston. He was a captain in the French War. (Calendar of English MSS. 685, 686,) Commissioner of the Poor, 1777; (Valentine's Manual 1863, 653.)

The children of Petrus Stuyvesant and Margaret Livingston were:

1. Judith, born Dec. 25, 1765; died March 7, 1844; married Benjamin Winthrop Jan. 19, 1785. He died Jan. 9, 1844.
2. Gerard, died in infancy.
3. Cornelia, died Feb. 24, 1825; married Dirck Ten Broeck.
4. Nicholas William, married Jan. 31, 1795, Catherine Reade. He died March 11, 1833.
5. Margaret, died Oct. 29, 1824, unmarried.
6. Ann Catharine, died young.
7. Elizabeth, born Feb. 11, 1775, died Sept. 6, 1854, married Nicholas Fish, April 30, 1803.
8. Peter, died young.
9. Peter Gerard, born 1778, died Aug. 16, 1847. Died without issue, though he was married twice, first to Susan Barclay and second to Helen Sarah Rutherford. She died August 17, 1873.
10. Gilbert Livingston, died young.
11. Catharine Ann, died young.

FIFTH GENERATION

NICHOLAS WILLIAM STUYVESANT, b. 1769, d. March 11, 1833, m. Jan. 31, 1795, Catherine Livingston Reade. She was born died Nov. 27, 1867.

Their children were:

1. Peter, b. 1796, d. Nov. 15, 1860, m. Nov. 8, 1828, Julia Martin. She died Feb. 14, 1883.
2. John Reade, b. 1792, d. Dec. 6, 1853, m. 1st, Catherine Ackerly, m. 2nd, Mary Austin Yates, in 1840. She died 1889.
3. Catherine, b. d. Dec. 14, 1872, m. June 8, 1826, John Mortimer Catlin.
4. Nicholas Wm., b. d. Feb. 4, 1871, m. Catherine Augusta Cheesbrough.

5. Gerard, b. March 4, 1806, d. Jan. 18, 1859, m. Susan Rivington Van Horne Nov. 24, 1836.
6. Margaret Livingston, b. d. July 17, 1845, m. Feb. 1, 1835, Robert Van Rensselaer.
7. Helen Cornelia, b. d. Oct. 24, 1890, m. May 25, 1831. Henry Dudley, m. 2nd, Francis Olmsted, m. 3rd, Nov. 25, 1851, Wm. Starbrick Mayo.
8. Joseph Reade, b. d. March 13, 1873, m. Jane Ann Browning. No issue.
9. Robert Reade, b. d. Jan. 14, 1834, m. Margurata Augusta Middleberger, Aug. 1, 1831.

PETER STUYVESANT'S FARM

The boundary of the Stuyvesant Farm originally ran from about Stanton Street and Third Avenue, north, along Third Avenue to Ninth Street. Then along Fourth Avenue to 14th Street and diagonally across Union Square to Broadway, following Broadway to about 25th Street. The northern boundary was an arc reaching 30th Street at Fourth Avenue and curving back to 25th Street and the East River. The southern boundary is hard to describe. It looks like a letter "Z" standing on its tail, or a drunken "N" falling over forwards. This line hit the River about 5th Street.

Peter Stuyvesant owned at one time what now is Stuyvesant Square, Gramercy Park, about half of Union Square, and a portion of Madison Square. In all about 550 acres. Two hundred acres including Gramercy Park and Union Square were sold during Peter Stuyvesant's life time, probably because at that time that part of the Island was low and swampy.

The purchases made by Peter Stuyvesant covered a period of about fifteen years. His first purchase was directly from the Dutch West India Company on March 12, 1651. The property purchased was 60 or 70 acres of land, a dwelling house and barns, six cows, two horses and two young negroes. The consideration to be paid the Company was 6400 guilders. Whether the negroes mentioned in this deed were the same ones who later became the subject of considerable diplomatic correspondence with the Spanish Government is not certain. That Government questioned the validity of the sale of certain negroes who were part of the cargo of a prize brought into New Amsterdam by a privateer and sold there.

All of the other purchases of Peter Stuyvesant were from individual owners, despite the fact that a New England historian makes the statement that Stuyvesant bought all his property from the Dutch West India Company and implies that there was a bit of shrewdness in the purchase. If we figure that the Dutch

West India Company bought all of Manhattan Island in 1626 for about 60 guilders, the price that Stuyvesant paid for 70 acres was quite startling and shows an abnormal increase in values in a period of twenty-five years not equalled by modern times.

The Dutch considered this part of Manhattan Island the most desirable part of the Island, and reserved it for the use of the officers of the Company. Kiliaen Van Rensselaer, who knew more about affairs in New Amsterdam than the Dutch West India Company, through his agents and members of his family, rented most of the property for many years.

It is hard to realize what the Farm looked like in those days. The land must have been low fertile meadow and wood land, with several small creeks running through it. A pond here and there with the salt marshes over towards the River. There was high ground near 14th Street and 4th Avenue that Mr. Ruggles afterwards used to fill in his swamp lots to make Gramercy Park. The shore of Long Island with its farms and green fields and the River were clearly visible. A peaceful countryside on the banks of a great inlet of the sea where the smell of the salt water mingled with that of the clover and the growing crops. Clean, neat Dutch farm houses dotted both banks of the River, which ran clear and green along the edge of the farm.

The house in which Stuyvesant dwelt was situated about 125 feet west of St. Mark's Church. Its site occupied a portion of the present churchyard and extended over to what now is the north side of 10th Street. This house was burned in 1777 by the British or American troops. A small Church or Chapel used as a private place of worship by the family, stood directly east of the house on approximately the location of the present Church. The family burial vault was in this chapel. In the churchyard and chapel the Governors of three different dynasties, Dutch, English and American, are buried almost side by side. Peter Stuyvesant, the last Dutch Governor, Col. Henry Slaughter, the English Governor, who died in 1691, and Daniel D. Tompkins, Governor of New York State. Across Second Avenue was a public graveyard, a part of which was reserved for the burial of the family slaves.

The gravestone of one reads as follows:

"Sacred to the memory of Mrs. Mary Bray, familiarly called 'Mammy Mary' born Sept. 14, 1747. Died Feb. 14, 1843. She was born near this spot, beneath the roof of Gerardus Stuyvesant, where she dwelt until his death in 1777. After that event, she remained the faithful servant and friend of the same family and thus passed her long life of near a century among the same kinfolk and in the same neighborhood in which she was born. She has now gone to dwell where the distinctions of this world are

unknown, and being found worthy to reap rewards which the proudest may be happy to share with her.

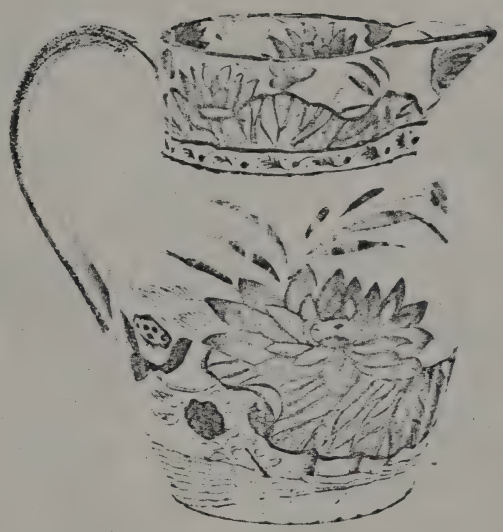
Nata Serva in Christo vivit in libera."

For about ninety years, the property remained intact. A farm seems to have been bought to the north, and certain meadow or swamp lots lost through neglect in taking out patents as the land was considered of little value. Governor Cornbury issued a patent in 1705 deeding 11 acres of swamp land of Trinity Church. The Church conveyed the property to John Watts. Watts forfeited the land in 1784 under the act of attainder, repurchased it at the sale, and twelve days later sold it to Petrus Stuyvesant. These purchases and sales were probably made to clear a disputed title. In 1741 a partition suit was brought to divide the property. A map dated 1741 shows the property to consist of about 360 acres. The 11 acres above mentioned are shown as a part of the property and are included in the map, regardless of the deed to Trinity Church and the sale by the Church to Watts.

In the partition suit, Ann Prichard, (Ann Stuyvesant) got about 130 acres of land as her share. Her brother, (Gerardus Stuyvesant 1691–1777), got the rest. Most of the land awarded to her was repurchased later by Gerardus.

There are three interesting points with regard to this suit; first, that the Dutch law with regard to the ownership of real estate and its division among the heirs of the deceased owner, prevailed at that time; and that another Dutch law was in force, viz. that no child under 21 years of age could marry without the consent of his or her parents, nor were the children of such a marriage entitled to inherit property, so Benoni, the son of his deceased younger brother Petrus and a washerwoman's daughter to whom he was legally married under the English law was declared illegitimate under the Dutch law and got no share in the property. A third feature of this suit is interesting. My grandfather, Hamilton Fish, seems to have suspected fraud on the part of Chief Justice Delancey before whom the case was tried, and in 1838 planned to reopen the case. I gather this from certain notes he made at that time.

Upon the death of Petrus Stuyvesant in 1805, the property was divided into two farms, the dividing line being the line of Stuyvesant Street as it then ran from Bouwery Lane to the River. The northern farm was called Petersfield, and went to Peter G. Stuyvesant. The southern farm called the Bouwery, went to Nicholas Wm. Stuyvesant, the two sons and sole heirs of Gerardus Stuyvesant. Peter G. Stuyvesant lived in a house that



PETER STUYVESANT'S CREAM PITCHER
In the possession of Stuyvesant Fish. Esq.

stood in the middle of the block on the south side of 16th Street between First Avenue and Avenue A, overlooking the River, then about one-half a block away. This house was occupied by Peter G. Stuyvesant as late as 1825. Nicholas William Stuyvesant lived near the northwest corner of what now is 8th Street and First Avenue. Both these houses were built in or about 1765.

At the beginning of the last century, a small village sprang up on the Bouwery Farm called the Bouwery Village. The schoolhouse stood close to the "Two Mile Stone" near the southeast corner of 8th Street and Third Avenue just east of Cooper Union. The school was kept in the upper story, the lower floor being occupied by the South Methodist Church. There was a large pond between 13th and 15th Streets on First Avenue, and the East River.

In 1803, the owners of Petersfield, with a view of splitting up the property into City lots, had a map prepared for this purpose. The main streets or Avenues ran east and west, not quite following the numbered streets as laid out later by the Legislature in 1807. When the owners plan had to be discarded to conform to the general plan for the development of the City, the only remnant of the old plan of streets to survive was Stuyvesant Street. The old map is quaint, the streets running east and west being named after the males of the family and their friends. In the center, among these names, is a group of three streets in order as follows: Governor, Peter, Stuyvesant. The north and south streets were named after the girls of the family, Elizabeth, Judith, Margaret and Cornelia. Elizabeth married Nicholas Fish. Judith, married Benjamin Winthrop, Margaret, died unmarried. Cornelia married Dirck Ten Broeck.

In 1880 my Grandfather, Hamilton Fish, wrote about Stuyvesant Street, as follows:

("Supplement N. Y. Evening Post, Sat. Apl. 17, 1880).

PETRUS STUYVESANT

How his Farm became an Important Part of the City—The Bowery Lane and the Street which bears his Name—An interesting Story by Ex-Governor Hamilton Fish.

STUYVESANT STREET

Stuyvesant Street was one of the many streets projected and opened by the proprieters of land in the upper part of the city, each of whom laid out streets through his own land with reference to his own conveniences, a view of the most advantageous disposition of his own estate, and without regard to streets which might be projected by his neighbors.

Petrus Stuyvesant, who owned a large tract of land east of what was

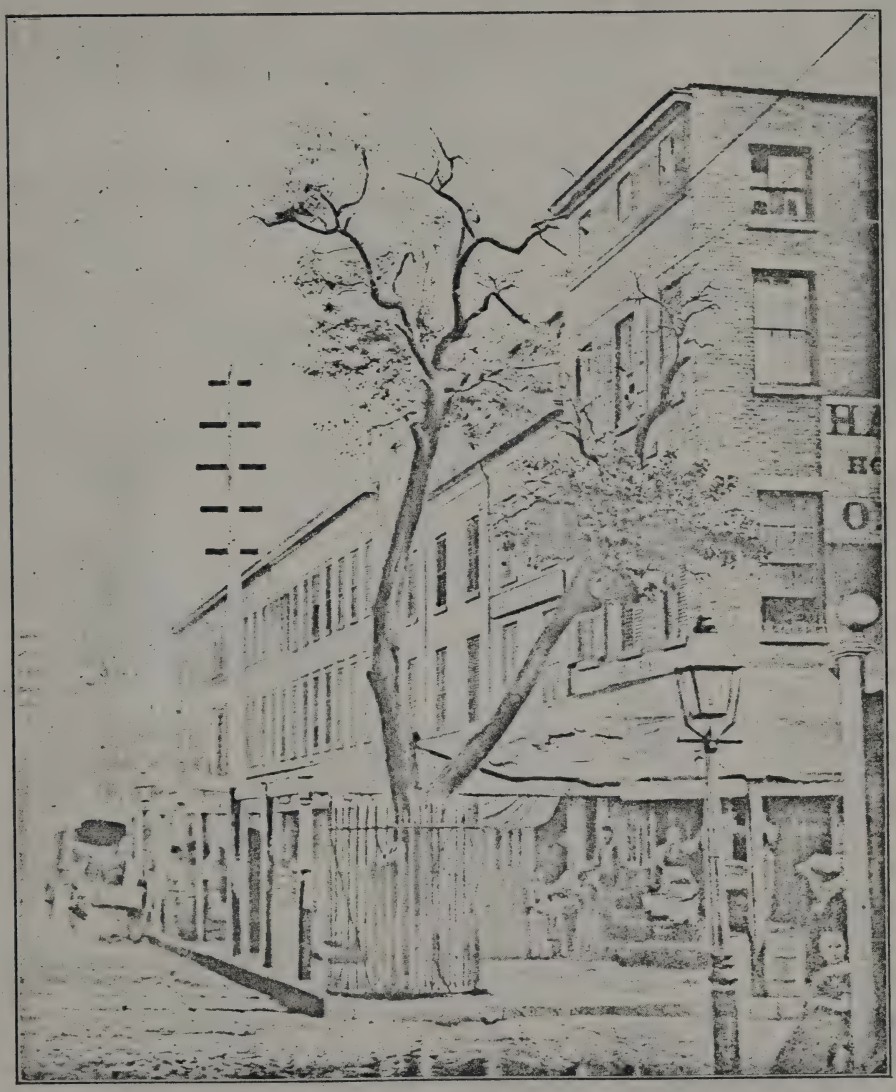
known as the "Bowery Lane," now the Bowery and Fourth Avenue, extending from Fifth to near Thirteenth Street, and thence to the East River, widening out so as to extend in some parts from Staunton Street to Twenty-first Street, caused a map to be made of his estate, dividing it by streets running north and south and east and west. By his will dated November 15, 1802, he gave his farm called the "Bowery Farm" to his son Nicholas William, and his farm called "Petersfield" to his son Peter Gerard. The will contained this clause: "Item—It is my will, and I do direct, that the street which I have caused to be laid out by Evert Bancker, Junior, from the Bowery Lane to the East River, and which is sixty-six feet wide, shall be the division between my two farms above described called the Bowery Farm and the Petersfield Farm." This was "Stuyvesant Street". It was not only laid down on Bancker's map but was marked out through its entire length, and through a large part of its extent (if not the whole) was opened during the lifetime of Mr. Stuyvesant. Not only were St. Mark's Church and several private dwellings built upon its line between the Bowery and Second Avenue, but the rectory of St. Mark's Church and other buildings were erected upon the line of the street, east of Second Avenue, in the early years of the present century. At the foot of the street was what was well known some fifty or sixty years ago as "Ortley's Dock," a pier and basin where row boats for fishing and pleasure excursions were to be hired; a place of frequent resort for young people, and where in 1815 the writer of this was rescued from the water nearly drowned. The writer remembers also to have been taken by his father early one cold morning to Ortley's Dock to see the frigate United States with her prize, the Macedonian, which had been detained beyond Hell Gate," (*On examinatin this appears to have been about the 28th or 29th December, 1812.) pass on their way to New York. They passed before we reached the river. Having been born in Stuyvesant Street, he remembers it as an open and travelled street from the Bowery to the East River, over which he has often passed, both on foot and in vehicles, at least as far back as 1813.

Ortley's Dock, above referred to, has long since disappeared; the land has been extended far beyond it into the river. It was situate about half way between Avenues A and B on about the line of the south side of Fifteenth Street. Bridge's Map of the City, as laid out by the Commissioners under the Act of 1807, bears date April, 1811, and shows the line of Stuyvesant Street from the Bowery to the East River with Ortley's Pier at the foot of the street, with the location of one or more houses in its line between the second avenue and the river.

The inconvenience resulting from the irregular projection and opening of the proprietary streets by the several owners of land in the upper part of the island, led to the enactment by the Legislature of the Act of April 3, 1807, appointing Gouverneur Morris, Simeon DeWitt and John Rutherfurd commissioners to lay out streets and roads in the whole northern part of the island. They adopted the rectangular system, and to them we are indebted for the numbered streets and avenues with which we are familiar.

Many proprietary streets besides Stuyvesant Street had been actually opened and were in use at the date of this act, which therefore provided that "no square or plot of ground made by the intersection of any streets to be laid out by the said commissioners shall ever, after the streets around the same shall be opened, be or remain divided by any public or open lane, alley, street or thoroughfare."

In Stuyvesant Street between the Bowery and Second Avenue, however, had been erected St. Mark's Church and a number of private dwellings; to close this part of the street would involve great inconvenience and would



THE STUYVESANT PEAR TREE IN 1863
N.E. Corner 13th Street and Third Avenue. New York Historical Society Collection

entail large expense in the way of damages. Application was therefore made to the Legislature which on March 9, 1831, enacted that "the land commonly called Stuyvesant Street, in the Eleventh Ward of the City of New York, as the same is now laid out, of the width of sixty-six feet, and running from the Bowery Road to the Second Avenue, is hereby declared for all legal purposes to be one of the public streets of the said city. . . ."

That part of the street to the east of Second Avenue, was left to the operation of the laws, above cited, that no square made by the intersection of any streets laid out by the commissioners, should, after the streets around the same are opened, be divided by any open land, street or thoroughfare. At what dates the several parts of Stuyvesant Street between the Second Avenue and the East River have been closed is not known, but it may be safely assumed that the greater part, if not the whole, of the street was open to travel as late as 1849 or 1850; parts of it undoubtedly were open much later."

The Farm ceased to be a farm in about 1803. At that time Petrus Stuyvesant the last owner cut down a part of the old orchard on the Petersfield Farm, the last tree of which, a pear tree, was standing on the northeast corner of 13th Street and 3rd Avenue as late as 1867. Petrus Stuyvesant built four houses for his four daughters. These houses were among the first built on Stuyvesant Street. Judith, Mrs. Winthrop, got No. 15. Cornelia, Mrs. Ten Broeck, No. 17, Margaret, who never married, No. 19, and Elizabeth, Mrs. Fish, No. 21.

At the east side of No. 21, extended a garden reaching to 10th Street in which were many flowers, two horse chestnut trees, several peach and pear trees, a box walk, currant and gooseberry bushes, an asparagus bed and other vegetables. There stood besides, an old black walnut tree. Tradition says that it grew from a nut given to Gerardus Stuyvesant by Mr. Bleecker. Back of the garden was the greenhouse and the stables. Here lived the family cow Emily. Before the days of Croton water, there were two pumps, the water of which was considered pure long after that date by the elder members of the family, despite the fact that the water stank and the younger members substituted the new fangled Croton water "unbenownst", despite strict orders to the contrary. In the old house, No. 21, was a mantel-piece now in Hamilton Fish Webster's house in Newport (the great grandson of the original owner). Here the little chimney sweep used to be shoved up the chimney to perform his work. He was required to sing a song at the top to show that his work was done. This fireplace was the one where the children hung their stockings at Christmas. There were cupboards in the old mantel-piece, from one of which on occasions the children got pennies. In another, there was a bottle of gin from which every night Old Mammy, one of the family slaves, used to get a

drink allowed her by Mrs. Nicholas Fish just before bedtime. The pennies are still in the old fireplace, but Mammy and the gin are long since gone, more is the pity! With the building of this block of houses for the children, the Farm became a part of the great City which has long since covered all of its acres with rows of houses.

STUYVESANT FISH.